

1792A
EA-02-16
5401
E-02-311
Laurel Curves

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

DECISION RECORD and FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Laurel Curves Timber Sale
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-02-16
Sale Tract No. E-02-311

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which analyzed the effects of this Proposed Action and alternatives. The EA and a preliminary Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were made available for public comment in June, 2002. One public comment was received.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (OR090-EA-02-16), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that: (1) the implementation of the Proposed Action or alternatives will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl," (April 1994) and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (June 1995); (2) the Proposed Action and alternatives are in conformance with the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan; and (3) the Proposed Action and alternatives do not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

DECISION

It is the decision of the Bureau of Land Management to select the Proposed Action (Alternative 1) described in the Laurel Curves Timber Sale EA. This EA and the FONSI analyzed the selected alternative and found no significant impacts.

Implementation of this decision will result in forest management activities including: density management of both Matrix and Riparian Reserve by commercial timber harvest; road construction, renovation, and decommissioning within the Matrix; road construction and decommissioning within the Riparian Reserves; and coarse woody debris creation in the Matrix and Riparian Reserves. All design features identified in the EA (pp. 3-5) will be implemented.

The selected alternative is in conformance with the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl," (NSO ROD, April 1994), and the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan," (RMP, June 1995), as amended by the "Record of Decision for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines," (January 2001).

ALTERNATIVES

In addition to the selected alternative, the EA considered four other alternatives in detail (EA, pp. 3-6). Alternative 2 would be similar to the Proposed Action except that there would be no harvest within Riparian Reserves except that associated with road building, and there would be no coarse woody debris creation in the Matrix or Riparian Reserves. Alternative 3 would include a Regeneration Harvest of the Matrix, no harvest within the Riparian Reserves except that associated with road building, and no coarse woody debris creation in the Matrix or Riparian Reserves. Alternative 4 would be similar to the Proposed Action in acres and volume harvested, but there would be less road construction in the Matrix, no road construction in the Riparian Reserves, and helicopter logging would take the place of conventional logging methods. Alternative 5 is the "no action" alternative and would involve no management activities.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION

The purpose of the action in the Matrix is to promote the development of late-successional forest structure over longer rotations while providing an output of merchantable timber and maintaining forest health and productivity. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 would meet this purpose of the action. The purpose of the action in the Riparian Reserves is to hasten the development of some late-successional forest structural characteristics. Only the Proposed Action and Alternative 4 would meet this purpose.

The Proposed Action would most effectively meet the purpose of the action. It provides forest products by density management. It would hasten the development of late-successional forest structural characteristics through acceleration of diameter growth of retention trees in both the Matrix and Riparian Reserves, hastening canopy layering and increased crown ratios.

Based on the analysis discussed and presented in the EA, the Proposed Action is consistent with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy and the objectives for the Riparian Reserves, and would not prevent or retard attainment of any of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives (EA, p. 11, 12). Silvicultural practices in the Riparian Reserves will help acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain ACS objectives (EA, pp. 11-12).

The Proposed Action and Alternatives 2 and 4 would degrade habitat for spotted owls on a local, short term basis; ultimately, late-successional habitat would be enhanced (EA, p. 17, 18). Alternative 3 would remove dispersal habitat (EA, p. 17). Alternatives 2 and 4 would provide approximately the same amount of timber (Alternative 4) to less timber (Alternative 2) (EA, p. 3) than the Proposed Action. Alternative 2 would have lesser short-term effects on spotted owl habitat because fewer acres would be harvested (EA, p. 17). However, fewer acres would benefit by achieving late-successional forest structure characteristics more quickly through density management (EA, pp. 17). Alternative 4 would have similar short- and long-term effects on spotted owl habitat. Alternative 3 would provide more timber and would have greater short-term effects than the Proposed Action.

Alternative 5 (no action) would not meet the purpose of the action within the Matrix or Riparian Reserves. Alternative 5 would provide no timber, nor would it reduce stand density. Alternative 5

would result in slower development of late-successional forest structural characteristics than Alternatives 1, 2, and 4, but faster development than Alternative 3 (EA, pp. 17, 18). Alternative 5 would have no immediate effects on wildlife habitat.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A public notice advertising the availability of the EA and FONSI appeared in the Eugene Register-Guard on June 26, 2002. Additionally, the EA and FONSI were mailed to interested individuals and organizations (EA, p. 22). A 30-day public comment period closed on July 26, 2002. One comment letter was received and is addressed in the EA.

Pursuant to the Endangered Species Act, consultation was completed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which found that the action "...[is] not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the spotted owl."

Consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not required for this Proposed Action or the Alternatives.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was notified of a harvest proposal in this section (Laurel Top Thinning) in 1992 and determined, in accordance with 36 CFR 800.5(b), that the proposed undertaking would have no effect on cultural resources.

The Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping process, requesting information regarding tribal issues or concerns relative to the project. No response was received.

IMPLEMENTATION

This decision will be implemented by a timber sale contract. A timber sale contract will implement the road construction, renovation, timber harvest, and decommissioning of roads used for timber harvest operations described in the Proposed Action (EA, pp. 3-5).

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

The decision to implement the timber sale portion of this project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for the timber sale portion of this project will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard on August 28, 2002. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of the timber sale portion of this project. 43 CFR 5003.2(b) Protests of the timber sale portion of this decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

Signed by Steven A. Calish, Field Manager

Date: 8/20/02